

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

---

# **Furness College**

**August 1996**

---

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

---

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

*The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to the FEFC's quality assessment committee.*

*College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.*

*Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
Telephone 01203 863000  
Fax 01203 863100*

---

# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	12
Governance and management	24
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	35
Teaching and the promotion of learning	43
Students' achievements	57
Quality assurance	67
Resources	74
Conclusions and issues	84
Figures	

---

---

## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

*The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.*

*The descriptors for the grades are:*

- *grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- *grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

*By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.*

### **College grade profiles 1993-95**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Inspection grades</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

---

---

# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 105/96

## FURNESS COLLEGE

### NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected September 1995-April 1996

#### Summary

Furness College is a general further education college. It serves a comparatively remote area of the north west which has great economic problems. The college is successfully responding to the rapidly changing needs of its local community and is making progress in broadening its provision. It has close links with local schools and higher education and works well with agencies which are helping to regenerate the local economy. Links with employers are improving. The college has experienced difficult times since incorporation but governors and managers have been successful in improving the college's finances. There are many adult students at the college. They are enthusiastic about their learning and many do well. A significant number of the younger students are on modern apprenticeships. There are good courses for students with learning difficulties. The majority of students on full-time courses achieve the qualification they are seeking. Most of the college is well equipped, and computing facilities at the two main campuses are good. Accommodation has been refurbished and is generally well maintained. The college should improve: its quality assurance system; the management of important curriculum developments; the quality of the teaching in many areas of the curriculum; course and lesson planning; and the management of information about students' achievements.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

<b>Aspects of cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	4
Resources: staffing	3
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Health and community care	3
Construction	2	Art and design	3
Engineering	3	Humanities	3
Business	4	Basic education/provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Hotel and catering, leisure and tourism	3		

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Furness College was inspected in the spring term of 1996. Sixteen inspectors visited the college for a total of 65 days. Specialist subject inspections took place in the week commencing 18 March 1996. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in the week beginning 29 April 1996. The enrolment and induction of students had previously been inspected at the beginning of the academic year, in September 1995.

2 Inspectors visited 132 teaching sessions and examined students' written and practical work. They held meetings with college governors, senior managers, section heads, teachers, staff responsible for support services, and students. Inspectors also met with representatives from local industry and Barrow Borough Council, the director of education of Cumbria County Council, representatives of the local community including a governor who is chair of the Barrow Disability Association, the chief executive of Furness Enterprise Ltd, the area manager of Cumbria Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), a representative of the Cumbria Careers Service and senior staff of local high schools and Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College. Inspectors attended meetings of the college board and its employment policy committee. A range of documents including the college's strategic plan, action plan and self-assessment report were examined, in order to review the college's progress toward the achievement of its mission.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

3 Vocational training in the Furness area of Cumbria can be traced back to the thirteenth century when the monks of Furness Abbey provided education for local people. Furness College has its origins in the college of science, technology and arts in Barrow which was opened in 1901. Until the early 1990s, the college's industrial links were closely tied to the needs of a single employer which became Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited, a member of the GEC Group of Companies whose main products are armaments, warships and submarines. The courses provided by the college were mainly in aspects of engineering and business studies. In 1991, Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited commenced a planned reduction in its workforce from 13,000 to 6,000 employees, over five years. The role of the college changed. Formerly, the college had provided off-the-job education and training for school leavers on apprenticeships who usually attended on a part-time or block-release basis. After 1991, the college began to give greater emphasis to the retraining of older students, some of them unemployed, who were seeking new areas of employment. Many of these adults attend the college as full-time students.

4 Barrow is comparatively remote. It has the highest proportion of skilled manual workers (24 per cent) and home owners (78 per cent) in Cumbria but the lowest proportion of car owners (60 per cent). Developments at Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited have had

---

a significant effect on the college and its community. A new retail development in Barrow is due to open in 1997. This, and the growth of tourism are intended to be the focus of economic regeneration in the area. There are a number of small, flourishing, high-technology firms in the nearby town of Ulverston, mainly related to marine and defence work. The college itself is currently the fifth largest employer in Barrow. It is the largest provider of education and training in the Barrow and Furness area.

5 The population of Barrow and Furness is about 73,000. In addition, the college serves the surrounding rural areas, and communities in south and west Cumbria. In March 1996, the unemployment rate in the Borough of Barrow was 10.6 per cent compared with the national average of 8.2 per cent. Fifty-two per cent of 16 year olds in Barrow continue in full-time education. In 1995-96 a further 7 per cent have taken up modern apprenticeships in engineering; they are attending the college full time for the first year of their apprenticeship. Thirty-two per cent of all 16 year olds in the area progress to youth training.

6 The college is located on three sites, all within walking distance of the town centre. The main campus is at Howard Street and dates from the 1950s. A neighbouring building in Anson Street is used for fabrication, welding and plumbing, and is about 10 years old. The college's nursery, in St Mary's annexe, a former primary school, is also on the Howard Street campus. The college's Channelside campus is on an industrial development park and was opened in 1992. This campus has modern new buildings for construction, science and engineering, including high technology facilities. The John Whinnerah Institute is in the town centre and is about 60 years old. It is shared with the local education authority (LEA) and the careers service and it houses catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy.

7 There is a sixth form college in the town. The nearest general further education college is more than 30 miles away in Kendal. Local secondary education is provided by five 11 to 16 schools, two 11 to 18 schools and two special schools. Furness College and Barrow-in-Furness Sixth Form College recruit from these.

8 Many people in the local community tend to associate the college mainly with the provision of vocational education and training in engineering for the employees of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited. This view belies the significant broadening of the college's provision in recent years, the efforts which have been made to respond to the rapidly changing needs of the local population, and the links which have been developed with schools, other colleges and higher education. Links are particularly effective with the University of Central Lancashire. The college was granted associate college status by the university in May 1993. The college enrolled 212 students on partnership higher education programmes with the university in 1995-96. A report from the Higher Education Quality Council compliments the university and the college on the good outcomes of this partnership. The college has introduced a

---

number of important developments in its curriculum and provision. It has also played a prominent role in a number of regeneration projects in the Barrow and Furness area.

9 Between 1992 and 1995, the number of full-time equivalent students enrolled increased by 32 per cent. In 1994-95 the college exceeded its unit enrolment targets by 12 per cent. In 1995-96, 5,166 students enrolled of whom 4,033 attend on a part-time basis. There are 433 students following courses of higher education. Nearly 75 per cent of the college's students are over 19 years of age and 46 per cent are women. About 2 per cent of students attending college are from minority ethnic backgrounds, a proportion which generally reflects the representation from these groups in the local population. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Staffing levels in the college have reduced significantly over the last few years particularly in the areas of engineering, business and management. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

10 There are six academic sections in the college: art and leisure industries; business, management and office technology; construction and transport technology; engineering technology; health studies and caring; and information technology and science. There are six administrative, business and support units: finance and information systems; learning resources; personnel; student services; technical services; and external liaison.

11 The aim of the college is 'to meet the needs of individuals and client groups for quality education and training against a background of equity and cost-effectiveness'. Underlying the aim are four strategic priorities:

- to increase activity
- to improve responsiveness
- to improve the quality of provision
- to maintain financial viability.

The four strategic priorities are embodied in corporate objectives and targets. An action plan, revised in October 1995 and evaluated in March 1996, identifies areas for development and action.

### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

12 The college has significantly broadened the range of courses it offers and these now span nine of the 10 programme areas of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Over the last five years, courses in leisure and tourism, health and social care, art and design, information technology and computing, public services, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and a broader range of learning opportunities in general education have been introduced to complement the well-established provision in construction, engineering, business and catering. A



---

programme of non-vocational leisure and recreation courses helps to attract adults back into education. There is a franchise arrangement with the British Red Cross Society for a jointly-developed scheme to help students gain first aid qualifications.

13 The range of courses allows students to progress from intermediate to advanced level and in some cases to higher level courses. The college offers full-time intermediate and advanced courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in science, art and design, business and finance, health and social care, leisure and tourism, and catering and hospitality. This year, however, the GNVQ intermediate course in science failed to recruit sufficient students. Full-time students can follow courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in engineering, construction, business administration, beauty therapy and food preparation. There are also full-time courses leading to first and national diplomas of the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC). In 1995-96, the college recruited 251 students aged 16 years to the first year of full-time courses, and 130 students to the first year of youth training courses.

14 The college's provision of part-time courses is extensive. It includes courses in many vocational areas, and in mathematics and humanities. There are 11 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and nine General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects. For mature students preparing for entry to higher education, the college offers seven intermediate and three advanced level units which are credited by the Open College of the North West. Progression to higher education is possible in engineering, construction, business, computing and humanities; from September 1996, it will also be possible in health and social care, and tourism and hospitality. These courses are offered through the associate college arrangements with the University of Central Lancashire.

15 Although the college has broadened its provision in order that it may appeal to a wider section of the community, some significant areas of work are not covered. Specialist provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well developed. The number of these students progressing to vocational courses is low, however, and the college offers few vocational courses at foundation level. Open learning opportunities, which permit students to study materials tailored to their needs, at times of their choice, is available in nine subjects leading to GCE A level and GCSE, and in a few higher level courses in engineering. The number of students who choose this mode of study is low; for example, in 1995-96, fewer than 30 students are studying for GCE A level and GCSE examinations through open learning. There is no outreach provision for people living in rural communities. The college does not provide any service for assessing and accrediting the prior learning and experience of those who have recently become unemployed; nor does it have

---

arrangements to offer them special provision which enables them to build on their previous knowledge and gain qualifications in a shorter timescale.

16 Links with the local TEC are productive and senior staff contribute to its work. In 1994-95, the college developed a prototype for a modern apprenticeship in engineering, which involved 30 students. In 1995-96, 65 students who are modern apprentices, receive off-the-job education and training at the college. Almost all are on engineering or construction courses and, with the exception of one apprentice, they are employed by Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited. The college also provides training for about 150 students through job-link programmes in engineering, hairdressing, sport and recreation, catering, construction and work preparation. Job-link programmes sponsored by Cumbria TEC integrate employment, education and training over a two or three-year period, and lead to NVQ qualifications.

17 Through its membership of the Furness education consortium, the college works closely and successfully with local secondary and special schools, and the sixth form college. This consortium was set up initially by the LEA to support the technical and vocational education initiative in the area. College staff train teachers from secondary schools and the sixth form college to help them gain training and development lead body awards. About 70 pupils from three secondary schools attend courses in the college to sample different aspects of construction, supported by the college's Construction Industry Training Board curriculum centre.

18 In October 1995, the college gained a further education award of £25,000 from British Telecom. The funds from this are to enable college students and pupils from three of the secondary schools in the consortium to use an integrated systems digital network linked to computers, in order that they may gain access to, and share, a wide range of information. The system provides oral and visual links. It can also support national and international communications and gives access to the Internet. The opportunities the system provides have been well received by the students and pupils involved. The college hopes that this initiative will promote a greater awareness of post-16 learning opportunities amongst secondary school pupils in the area. Since incorporation, the college has maintained positive links with members and officers of Cumbria County Council. The principals of further education colleges in Cumbria meet regularly, and sometimes with the director of education. They consider these meetings to be useful.

19 The college plays a valuable role in a range of nationally and locally funded initiatives to assist the local community. In addition to providing education and training, the college significantly contributes to strategic planning for the area. It has been instrumental in bringing some of its partners together and it works with them to regenerate the local economy. The college expresses its commitment to helping local community through its membership of professional groups in the area. It is developing strong

---

links with small, medium and large enterprises and has offered education and training for people who need to develop new skills. For example, from September 1996, the college's business courses will place greater emphasis on retailing and distribution, identified as areas of need in the community. The college is collaborating with the probation service to provide training in information technology skills for groups of ex-offenders.

20 Links with local employers are improving. About 350 companies provide work placements for students. The college is offering an increasing number of short courses, tailored to employers' needs. As a result of extending its range of industrial contacts, the college is no longer so dependent upon firms associated with the defence industry. At the time of inspection, the income from training courses was approaching £150,000, compared with £60,000 for the previous academic year. Employers and college staff attend the recently-established business forum hosted by the college at which representatives of local business meet to discuss issues of common interest and hear presentations on key themes by external speakers. However, in most vocational areas, employers are not involved in the development of the curriculum. The college has no advisory committees for vocational areas of its work. Few members of the business or industrial community attend course review and planning meetings.

21 The college has international links with Sweden, Ireland, Belgium and East Germany. For example, in 1995-96 there was an exchange between students in East Germany and Barrow. Ten students from East Germany have visited the college for three weeks to develop skills in engineering, and 10 students from Furness College will make a reciprocal visit to East Germany later in the year. In each case, the students continue their studies while on the visit; their work is assessed and their achievements count towards their final qualification.

22 The college has carried out little market research to inform its planning of provision. Individual members of staff from different sections of the college work hard to promote courses to schools and industry, but their activities often lack strategic direction and are poorly co-ordinated. The college prospectus, which is updated every two years, describes the range of courses available to school leavers, mature students and employers. It is an eye-catching publication with attractive colour photographs. Its language, however, is difficult for many school leavers and the section on the services which the college offers to employers is vague. A recent report from an external liaison steering group set up by the senior management team has begun to identify and address some of the college's weaknesses in marketing and publicity. This report makes recommendations which have been approved.

23 The college's commitment to equality of opportunity for students and staff is integral to its mission and is expressed fully in its equal opportunities policy, part of which is published in the college charter. At the time of the inspection, the implementation of the policy was not properly monitored.

---

Although there is an equal opportunities panel in the college, it has no formal status and no clear terms of reference. The panel draws senior managers' attention to equal opportunities issues as these occur but it does not do so systematically.

### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

24 The college has experienced difficult times since incorporation. Governors and managers have concentrated upon the task of establishing sound finances. In this they have been successful. Other aspects, including some important issues relating to the management and development of the curriculum and quality assurance, have received less attention. Achievements since incorporation include: improvement of accommodation through refurbishment and some new building; growth in student numbers to meet targets; sound links with schools and other colleges; designation as an associate college of the University of Central Lancashire; introduction of new curriculum areas and courses; and the successful negotiation of new contracts for staff.

25 The senior management team comprises the principal, a vice-principal and two assistant principals. All staff in the college belong to either an academic section or a support unit. Heads of sections and units are responsible for managing their specialist areas. The senior managers and all heads of sections and units meet formally once a month. Meetings are minuted, future action is identified and followed up at subsequent meetings. These meetings enable the work of senior and middle managers to be co-ordinated. In some other respects, however, there is scope for improving the lines of communication between section heads and senior managers.

26 Since incorporation, there have been changes to the senior management structure. There are now fewer senior managers and, to some extent, they are overburdened with responsibilities. Staff expressed some apprehension about these changes at senior management level. They said that they were unclear about the roles and responsibilities of managers and uncertain about lines of communication in the college. There are weaknesses in the way the college is managed. Some initiatives have not been brought to fruition. For example, arrangements for quality assurance and liaison with employers have not been satisfactorily completed.

27 There are 16 members of the board, including seven independent members, two members of staff, a student representative and the principal. At the time of the inspection, there was one vacancy for an independent member on the board. Governors are committed to the work of the college and, between them, they have a good range of expertise. The backgrounds of independent members include industry, personnel management, environmental health, law, construction and finance. Other members are drawn from the TEC, the University of Central Lancashire, secondary schools and the Barrow Disability Association. There are five committees:

---

finance and general purposes; audit; land and buildings; employment policy; and remuneration. Each governor is a member of at least one of these committees. The land and buildings committee includes members co-opted from the senior management team and from outside the college. The governors' steering group, comprising the chairs of subcommittees and other more experienced governors, provides valuable assistance to the work of the board. The clerk to the board is the college's personnel manager. A programme of governor training has been introduced and presentations by senior managers have been well received. Governors comment that they now feel more confident in identifying and discussing educational and other issues of relevance to the college. Governors have yet to put into place arrangements to monitor their own performance.

28 The board meets six times each year. Meetings are well managed and documents are of a good quality. The governors are encouraged to make a contribution at meetings and most do so. Regular reports on health and safety issues are received. The work of the committees is particularly effective. For instance, the employment policy committee has made a notable contribution to the development of personnel policies and procedures in the college. There are good relations between governors and senior managers. The powers of delegation to the principal are clearly understood. The board, through the finance and general purposes committee, receives regular reports on the college's finances, and a budget statement each year. Monthly financial statements have recently been issued. The board relies on senior managers for reports and guidance. The chair of the board is provided with relevant background documents. These are, however, not always given to all governors to give them necessary information upon which to base their judgements. The board does not receive regular reports on the college's progress toward achieving its objectives. There are relatively few instances of the board discussing issues or information relating to the curriculum or students' achievements. The minutes of the academic board are received but are not usually discussed.

29 The maintenance and development of strong links with the communities of Barrow and Furness are at the forefront of the college's mission. With guidance and support from senior managers, the governors have made an important contribution toward determining the mission, strategic priorities and corporate objectives of the college, and they are committed to their successful implementation. They support the college's involvement in the 'Heart of Barrow' initiative funded by a single regeneration budget for the area, and the 'University of the Lakes' initiative. The governors have helped to develop links with higher education and with other further education providers in the locality. Governors are seldom involved in the planning of curriculum areas, even when they have specialist expertise and could make a valuable contribution to curriculum development. Governors, members of the senior

---

management team and consultants have worked well together to create an enterprising and forward-looking accommodation strategy. This builds upon improvements already made, is closely linked to the college's strategic plan and gives priority to those areas of provision which are currently housed in poorer accommodation.

30 In 1995-96, the average level of funding is £18.08 compared with the median for all further education and tertiary colleges of £17.84. There has been a slight decrease in the college's average level of funding from 1994-95 to 1995-96. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college receives over 60 per cent of its income from the FEFC. Other sources of income are the TEC, funds for higher education provision in association with the University of Central Lancashire and payments for its adult education provision from the LEA. Income from European Union Funds is £148,000.

31 Funds for consumables are distributed on a formula which broadly reflects students' enrolments in the curriculum areas. Section heads carry out further apportioning of funds to areas of work. Most heads of section understand the formula funding used to distribute funds across the college. The way resources are allocated supports the strategic planning objectives of the college and leads to rigorous control of sections' budgets. In one or two instances, allocations of the funding within sections does not appear to be equitable, and some aspects of provision are underfunded.

32 The academic board has 16 members including the principal and assistant principals and four student members. It has three subcommittees: curriculum policy and development; student affairs; and internal quality audit. The academic board contributes to the development of college policies and practice. Since its re-establishment in April 1994 the academic board is starting to influence developments in the college. Agendas and minutes are sent to all staff workrooms. There is some evidence, however, that the potential of the academic board to contribute to the work of the college is not widely understood by staff. All staff are eligible to be candidates for the academic board but those elected are not necessarily representative of sectional interests in the college or of staff working on different campuses.

33 In some of the academic sections, there are clear lines of responsibility and communication, good teamwork, thorough course organisation and administration, and an appreciation of the need to develop new courses. In others, there is an over-reliance on informal management procedures which lack rigour and accountability. Many sections and units have implemented a process of identifying how their own development plan contributes to the achievements of the college's overall strategic objectives, but this has only been partially successful. Some development plans are weak. They do not clearly specify future developments or include realistic targets. The monitoring of these plans by senior managers is ineffective. Some staff have not accepted the college's new mission and the objectives

---

set out in the strategic plan. Some course teams meet infrequently. There is currently no system in place for monitoring and analysing outcomes, at section or college level, against the performance indicators identified by the college, or for monitoring any remedial action which may need to be taken. Heads of section are not clear about their role in the review of quality.

34 The college's management information system is unreliable. In one important respect, the data supplied for use during the inspection are not accurate. Even after a number of revisions, the poor quality and unreliability of information on students' achievements make any analysis of, and comment on them, difficult. The college has, nevertheless, been able to submit an acceptable individualised student record return to FEFC. There are weaknesses in the management of documentation; different, undated versions of documents are circulated within the college. This leads to confusion amongst staff and delays in developing or implementing college policies and new initiatives.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

35 The college's student services unit, first established in 1992, co-ordinates and provides guidance on support for students across the college. The unit has developed well. It has a team of seven qualified student support workers. They work well together and have clear roles and responsibilities. The student services manager is a member of the student affairs and internal quality audit subcommittees of the academic board, and the college group responsible for developing admissions arrangements. Other members of the student services team work with academic sections and some attend their curriculum and course planning meetings. The staff of the student services unit have made a useful contribution to the development of new college policies, systems and procedures. They have helped to formulate new arrangements for the enrolment and induction of students and informally monitor these. They have also contributed to handbooks for tutors and students, and to the learner agreements which students are required to sign when they enrol at the college. The unit is well regarded and its services are valued by both students and staff.

36 The student services unit provides a useful first point of contact at the college for potential students and for external agencies. It provides information and guidance on college courses, fees, the grants and benefits available to students, additional support for learning and the college's provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It offers a personal counselling service and can refer clients to professional or special counselling if this is needed. It has dealt with nearly 3,000 applications for support in 1995-96, and has already received about 1,000 such applications from students who will be attending the college in 1996-97. The unit monitors the level of demand for its services which last year totalled up to 1,200 enquiries a week at the main campus. Insufficient

---

use is made of the information it currently collects. It is now developing service standards against which it will measure its provision. There is a students' union of which all students have automatic membership. The union provides a focus for students' leisure activities and it is informally supported in this by the student services unit.

37 Careers advisers from Cumbria Careers Service visit the college under an annual service level agreement between the college and the local authority. The three careers advisers who are linked with the college provide advice to groups of students on courses across the college. During induction, and throughout the year, they provide individual advice by appointment. In 1995-96, they conducted 264 careers interviews with students. In 1995-96, nearly 70 college students applied for higher education places through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. Course tutors provide individual support and advice for their students although the accuracy and consistency of the advice and guidance given to students are not monitored. A policy for the accreditation of students' prior learning was developed in January 1993 but there has been little progress on its implementation since then. The student services unit is not yet able to offer guidance to potential students on how accreditation of their prior learning might benefit them.

38 The college has improved its admissions procedures. In September 1995, enrolment was adequately carried out although the overall effectiveness of the process was somewhat constrained by the availability of suitable accommodation at Howard Street. Some sections have developed clear criteria for interviewing and enrolling their students, and recording information. Records of achievement are sometimes used at interviews. Their use is optional within the college and in most areas they do not play a significant role. In theory, students follow a college-wide programme of induction. Tutor and student handbooks are designed to ensure a consistent approach by course tutors to the key aspects of the induction process. In practice, induction varies across the college. Some teachers support the induction process whilst others question its value. Tutors are asked to complete a checklist of the induction activities which they organise for their students. These activities are evaluated by the student services unit. They include the opportunity for students to read and discuss the college charter document and to be told of their rights. Some students were also asked to complete a questionnaire on the quality of their induction experience. Most responded favourably.

39 All full-time students take the Basic Skills Agency diagnostic test. Those who are identified as needing additional support with literacy and numeracy can receive this through timetabled sessions, usually at the Howard Street campus. A well-produced leaflet describes the support provision which is available. Tutors can refer students for additional support, or students can arrange to attend the sessions on their own initiative. In 1995-96, 85 students received additional support for learning



---

although the college estimates that this figure represents only about one-third of those who need it. The present arrangements fail to identify all those students who need additional support. The resources for support, and the support itself, are not always effective. Future developments will focus on the particular learning needs of unemployed adults attending full-time courses. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully identified and individual support for learning is planned by the college's co-ordinator and other specialist staff.

40 All students have a designated tutor and all full-time courses have a timetabled, one-hour tutorial period each week. There is no timetabled tutorial period for part-time students. Their tutorial support is provided during normal class sessions. The tutor handbook describes the support which should be provided. In practice, the tutorial arrangements vary from planned, regular group and individual tutorial sessions to informal arrangements in which students are expected to seek out their tutor if they need help or guidance. Students, nevertheless, commented that whatever the arrangements, they felt confident that the support of a tutor was available to them if it was needed, and that regular informal support is provided by their main teacher when he or she is also their tutor. The standard of record keeping by tutors is often poor. There is seldom evidence that tutors follow up issues, record the actions they have taken and monitor their effectiveness. The college is working on improvements to the tutor handbook to ensure better support for part-time students and clearer guidance for tutors.

41 The college has clear guidelines on students' attendance which is monitored by course tutors and teachers. Students said they are contacted by the college if they are absent. Some class registers are not up to date, however, and do not necessarily show when students had left their course or give the reasons why they did so. College records show that 1,200 students left their course prematurely during 1994-95. A new system for monitoring class registers is being piloted in the college.

42 The college's nursery was established in 1993 and provides 34 places for babies and toddlers aged from six months to five years. It is also open to the general public. At the time of the inspection it was fully subscribed. The nursery provides supervised work placements for college students on nursery nursing courses.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

43 Forty-eight per cent of the sessions inspected had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. This is below the average figure of 64 per cent recorded in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1994-95*. In 14 per cent of sessions, the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded for the teaching sessions inspected.

---

**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		0	5	2	0	0	7
Basic education		3	4	3	0	0	10
GCSE		0	4	8	0	0	12
GNVQ		1	12	7	6	0	26
NVQ		0	16	11	1	0	28
Other vocational		3	13	17	9	1	43
Other*		0	2	2	2	0	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>132</b>

*\*includes access to further education and higher education.*

44 The average level of student attendance for the teaching sessions inspected was 74 per cent of those enrolled. The highest average attendance (84 per cent) in a subject area was in engineering. The lowest average attendance (44 per cent) was in humanities. An average of nine students were present in the classes inspected, ranging from an average of 13 students in engineering classes to five students in humanities.

45 In the better lessons, teachers related well to their students and used an appropriate variety of activities and teaching materials. Teachers drew on their own and students' vocational experience to illustrate specific points. Students responded positively, often worked with enthusiasm and evidently enjoyed their studies. Lessons were well planned. Work was appropriately structured and sequenced. It was challenging and of a standard appropriate to the aims and level of the course. In groups where there were students of differing ages and abilities, teachers identified the needs of individual students and took these into account. Assessment criteria were clearly defined and explained to the students. Their work was regularly checked and thoroughly marked. Teachers maintained careful records of their students' progress. They helped students to develop individual action plans for learning and to set realistic achievement targets.

46 In many lessons, however, the weakness outweighed the strengths. Some lessons were poorly planned. Documentation for some courses was of variable quality and for some, there was little or none at all. In many programme areas, there were teachers who lacked appropriate pedagogical skills. Their lessons were dull and unimaginative. A number of teachers relied too heavily on printed materials, some of which were of poor quality or out of date. Others failed to make enough use of handouts to provide support for students' learning. Often, teachers failed to make the lesson exciting and stimulating. They did not ensure that students were fully engaged in activities and did not check that they understood the topic being taught. Some classes with low numbers were particularly poor as they offered little opportunity for group discussion. In a few instances,

---

teachers gave students information about the content of their course which was incorrect or misleading.

47 In mathematics, science and computing, inspectors looked, in particular, at courses in computing, human biology, sports science and GCSE mathematics. Some mathematics for vocational courses was also inspected. Most mathematics teachers had prepared their lessons well. They showed skill in presentation and analysis, and encouraged students to develop logical arguments and the ability to solve problems. Some teachers, however, failed to take enough account of the differing needs of students; activities were not varied enough to cater for the full range of ability. There is no scheme of work for GCSE mathematics. GCSE mathematics teachers failed to check sufficiently that the students understood what was being taught. There is some good teaching in science and computing. In science lessons, students were careful to observe health and safety procedures and they were given helpful notes describing laboratory routines in chemistry, physics and biology. In one particularly effective lesson, students worked on scientific data and then presented their findings to other students in their group. The students clearly enjoyed the lesson which provided them with the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills of analysis and presentation. In science, mathematics and computing, the recording of students' progress is inadequate.

48 Construction teachers have worked together to develop schemes of work which form coherent programmes of study for students. Structures are flexible. Students can join and leave courses at different times of the year. Students work at a pace which matches their ability and takes account of their other learning commitments and their jobs. Teaching is supplemented by learning packs which students can study on their own. These are particularly appreciated by mature students who may not be able to attend college regularly. Students from different trades carry out effective project work and learn to work with others in an industrial setting. For example, students of brickwork, carpentry and joinery, and fabrication and welding have worked well together on improving the area close to the construction workshop; they have built walls, installed seating and paved areas to form new, permanent features in the college grounds. The site was initially surveyed by technician students who designed the layout and specified the materials to be used. These students also undertook some supervisory duties and checked that the finished work met the specified standards.

49 Courses in mechanical and manufacturing engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, fabrication and welding, and motor vehicle engineering were inspected. There was some good teaching in these areas, but many lessons failed to excite the students' interest. In many theory lessons, teachers spent too much time talking to the class and seldom invited responses from the students. Some of the handouts and worksheets

---

were out of date and many entailed dull and unimaginative tasks such as copying simple diagrams from the board. By contrast, practical lessons in fabrication and welding, mechanical engineering, and computer-aided design were well taught and enjoyed by the students. In workshops, teachers and students paid proper attention to health and safety regulations. Assessments are carefully scheduled to take place throughout the year to ensure that the students have an acceptable spread of work. Although most teachers give careful assessment to core skills, some of the assessment practice is poor and fails to provide students with guidance on how they might improve their work.

50 A minority of business, management and office technology lessons were good. There were imaginative activities which students could complete at their own pace, lively debates, well-managed discussions, and sensitive guidance and support from the teacher. In some effective management classes students drew on their own experiences to illustrate points under discussion. In many lessons, however, teachers failed to ensure that students were challenged and motivated to learn. Some courses are poorly documented. Schemes of work and lesson plans are of variable quality. Most handouts and printed learning materials are poor. Some courses are not timetabled to give students access to the library or computer facilities.

51 The inspection of catering, travel and tourism focused on GNVQ and NVQ courses. Students worked well in class and teachers provided them with ample information on their progress and the quality of their work. Students experiencing difficulties were given sound guidance and advice to help them improve. In addition to a diagnostic test at enrolment, catering students took a further test related to the particular skills they would need in industry. The teaching of practical work was satisfactory. Catering students worked hard and, on occasions, they were prepared to give up their free time to maintain the service in the college restaurant. The requirement that they wear appropriate clothing was not always firmly enforced. There is scope for students to be made more familiar with the cost of raw materials so that they may understand the economics of large-scale food preparation.

52 In health and social care, some lessons were well planned and well structured and had clear aims and objectives. In some of the longer lessons, teachers provided students with a variety of appropriate activities which sustained their interest. Teachers made good use of overhead transparencies and video recordings. Criteria for the assessment of students' work were clear. Some weaker lessons lacked clear objectives, momentum and challenge for the students. There is scope for teachers to improve their questioning techniques in order that they may encourage students to develop and express their own ideas through discussion. In a few instances, teachers displayed poor control in the classroom and failed to check disruptive students. In some instances, teachers were slow to

---

identify, or take action to help, students who had problems with basic literacy.

53 During the period of the inspection, there was little hairdressing taking place because college staff had arranged work placements for first and second year students at that time. Salons for practical work compare well with those used in commercial practice. In some lessons, there was good rapport between staff and students, and teachers supported and encouraged students in their work. The college has developed a range of well-designed, open learning packages for students who may not always be able to attend college regularly because of their work or family commitments. It sells these commercially and they are also used effectively in the college's salons. Specialist sessions were provided by the manufacturers of hair and beauty products used in the salons. The assessment of practical work was thorough. Students had a clear understanding of the NVQ assessment requirements. The documents used for assessment are well designed. Teachers keep clear records of their students' progress. Other course documentation is not so good. There are no schemes of work with linked lesson plans. Registers are not always kept up to date. There is no clear policy on work placement for students.

54 In art and design, the GCE A level art and the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) programmes are well designed and provide students with a balanced programme of study which relates well to the course objectives. Some teachers prepare detailed and informative materials to help and support the students in their work. These clearly indicate what is expected of the students and they are intended to help them succeed. In lessons, teachers made good use of the work of former students to provide exemplars for the class. The standard of teaching overall was variable. The tasks undertaken by students, and the assessment given, were not always appropriate to the level of study. Some students were insufficiently challenged. On both GNVQ and Open College courses, some teaching is insufficiently planned and structured to ensure the students give of their best. The schemes of work for GNVQ programmes are not well designed. Students are expected to attempt additional units too early in the course before they have developed the skills to tackle them successfully. Core skills, especially the application of number, are not adequately assessed and students' achievements are not properly recorded. There is insufficient use of information technology in art and design.

55 The inspection of humanities concentrated upon GCE A level, GCSE and Open College courses in psychology, sociology, general studies and English. The better lessons provided students with a variety of appropriate activities and a balance between those directed by the teacher and those managed by the students. Teachers encouraged students to engage in discussion and respond to questioning, in order to check that they had understood the lesson. Teachers also successfully used examples from

---

everyday life to illustrate topics under discussion. They marked work carefully and provided the students with helpful comments on their performance. In some examples of poor classroom practice, students were given little opportunity to develop and express their thoughts and ideas in class. In some groups, they were inhibited because a few students were allowed to dominate discussion. Some classes were beset by a high degree of absenteeism and the range of learning activities was restricted because of the low numbers of students present. For example, in social sciences, it was difficult for the teacher to sustain a useful discussion about students' experiences when there were so few in the class. Teachers have not taken sufficient action to remedy the unsatisfactory levels of attendance on many humanities courses. Some course documentation is weak. Many schemes of work are no more than lists of topics to be covered. Lesson plans seldom include specification of how students' learning will be evaluated and assessed.

56 The inspection of courses in adult basic education and the college's provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities concentrated on basic skills, GNVQ and NVQ access courses and the college's 'choices' programme. Most courses lead to recognised qualifications. The teaching is well planned and organised, and some is excellent. The students are mostly well motivated. Their achievements are good. Class assistants provide appropriate individual support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff work well together to help all students to develop skills and broaden their experience. Course documents are clearly written and well used by staff. Records of students' progress are generally well maintained although there is currently no system for recording and monitoring the extent to which they use the learning support workshop. Students are able to progress to mainstream courses such as GNVQ and NVQ access programmes in retailing. In lessons, teachers discussed, and agreed with the students, the general pace of work and the way in which new topics would be taught. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities gained confidence in manufacturing and marketing skills through a project to run a charity market stall. Teachers and support workers also helped these students to design a menu, lay tables, then prepare and enjoy a meal as part of an Open College module on 'catering and dining'. When the work was finished the students successfully evaluated the session and described what they had learned.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

57 The great majority of students in the college are adults. Their maturity and commitment are reflected in their responsive and enthusiastic approach to learning. Most students in the college show a clear resolve to succeed on their courses and many do so. There are, nevertheless, instances where the achievement of students is diminished by the low expectations teachers have of them, or the poor attitudes some students on a minority of courses have towards work and study.

---

58 Students who remain committed to their course and complete it, generally achieve a good level of knowledge and skills. In construction, the students' performance in assignments and written work demonstrates their sound grasp of both the theoretical and practical aspects of their course. Catering students maintain carefully-kept folders of their work and these illustrate how they have built up their understanding and skills to an appropriate level and indicate the pride they take in their studies. Engineering students produce assignment work which shows how they have made good progress in a range of activities. Art and design, and science students demonstrate a good grasp of requisite skills and knowledge. There are some notable examples of work by students of all abilities which demonstrate their ability to think in a rigorous and scientific way. Mathematics students try hard to understand concepts and to solve problems but they have significant weaknesses in their algebraic skills.

59 There are serious weaknesses in the accuracy and reliability of college data relating to students' achievements. Because there is no systematic collation of information on students' achievements across the college, it is not possible to judge students' achievements accurately against national comparators. Senior managers do not have a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of students' performance in examinations and other forms of assessment. The college has failed to meet both the statutory requirement and its charter commitment to publish a summary of students' achievements for the information of the general public. The lack of reliable data has prevented the college from submitting its 1994-95 return to the Department for Education and Employment so that its position in the performance tables for vocational qualifications cannot be determined.

60 According to the college data available, the majority of students on full-time, vocational programmes who complete their studies achieve the qualification for which they are aiming. Findings include:

- an average pass rate of 64 per cent on two-year BTEC national diploma courses. The best results were in science and health studies which both had a pass rate of 91 per cent. The pass rate in mechanical engineering was 74 per cent and in construction it was 69 per cent. On the BTEC first diploma course in public services, only 50 per cent of students obtained the award
- an excellent pass rate of 100 per cent on nursery nursing courses
- pass rates on GNVQ courses in art and design, and leisure and tourism, within the standard timescale for completion, are 57 per cent, which is comparable with the average results for sector colleges
- a pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate courses of 56 per cent which is above the national average of 48 per cent for sector colleges. On the GNVQ intermediate hospitality and catering course, only 20 per cent of students obtained the award

- 
- pass rates on NVQ courses in business administration and secretarial studies which are generally good. However, only 57 per cent of the students who initially enrolled on the medical secretaries course successfully completed the programme
  - high levels of achievement of NVQ engineering students who have pass rates of between 80 and 100 per cent. In construction, the proportion of full-time students who gained an NVQ was low
  - pass rates on hairdressing and beauty courses, which have declined over the last three years. In 1994-95, only 47 per cent of students on the one-year NVQ level 2 course in beauty therapy gained the qualification
  - the impressive achievements of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those on basic skills programmes, many of whom make substantial progress.

61 A high proportion of part-time students undertaking computer literacy and information technology courses successfully gain their qualification. In construction and engineering, the results and retention rates of students on one-year, part-time courses are good but these are more variable on two-year, part-time courses. The overall results on C&G electrical installation courses are poor, with pass rates of between 20 and 50 per cent. The pass rates on higher national certificate courses in engineering are variable. They range from 93 per cent on the higher national certificate courses in mechanical and production engineering to 57 per cent on the higher national certificate courses in electrical and electronic engineering. The results on national certificate courses in engineering are poor, with only half of the students successfully completing their courses.

62 In 1994-95, there were only 10 students in the college aged 16 to 18 years who took GCE AS/A level examinations. The great majority of students undertaking GCE A level studies in the college are aged 19 years and above. In 1994-95, there were 188 GCE A level entries in the college. The average pass rate, at grades A to E, was 55 per cent which is substantially below the national average for further education sector colleges of 69 per cent (all ages). The average pass rate for full-time students, which represents a third of all entries, is 66 per cent. For part-time students, the pass rate of 50 per cent was much lower than the national average.

63 For students completing their GCE AS/A level studies, the main features of the results are:

- pass rates on full-time courses which are above the national average in general studies, psychology and sociology. In English and human biology the pass rates are substantially below the national average



- 
- the pass rates on part-time courses which are above the national average in human biology, accountancy, psychology, general studies, law and psychology. Pass rates are well below the national average in English, sports studies and, in particular, in sociology which had a pass rate of 12 per cent
  - none of the 17 students originally enrolled on the GCE A level business studies course obtained the qualification.

64 According to the college's information on students' achievements in GCSE examinations in 1994-95, there were 280 entries in 12 different subject areas. Of the students entered, 54 per cent gained grades A to C. This is above the average of 48 per cent for students of all ages in general further education colleges, but below the national average of 60 per cent for students aged 19 years and above, who form a high proportion of the college's students. In the two GCSE subjects, mathematics and English, for which the college enters most students, the proportions of students gaining grades A to C were 34 per cent and 59 per cent respectively and these are both below the respective national averages for students aged 19 years and above. Results in GCSE art, accountancy and law are generally good.

65 The college does not systematically monitor and analyse retention rates. From the incomplete data available, the retention rates on full-time vocational courses average about 90 per cent, with retention rates below this figure on health and community care, and art and design courses. The college's figures show comparatively high retention rates on the majority of part-time vocational courses, but lower levels of retention and completion on both full-time and part-time GCE A level and GCSE courses.

66 The college does not have complete information on students' destinations when they leave the college. Some sections, however, keep records of their own students' destinations. A good proportion of the students on adult access courses successfully proceed to higher education. In 1995, for instance, 11 of the 19 students on the GCE A level access course gained places on higher education courses. Nearly half of these had decided to undertake the first year of their degree course at the college.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

67 The college's framework for quality was introduced five years ago but progress on its implementation has been slow and uneven. There are still widespread deficiencies in the college's quality assurance system. In most respects, the system falls short of ensuring that the college meets the commitment to quality expressed in its mission statement.

68 The improvement of the college's quality assurance system is a key priority of senior managers and an assistant principal has a designated responsibility for this. An updated policy on, and new procedures for, quality assurance have been introduced. The college aims to monitor the

---

quality of provision through a process of course review and evaluation, and the use of performance indicators. At the time of inspection, the recently-formed, internal quality audit subcommittee of the academic board had met only twice. The quality assurance system has not yet led to identifiable improvements in courses. The system is not well understood nor consistently implemented by teaching staff. The college's system for ensuring quality standards and procedures for support services is more effective. It has, for example, resulted in improvements in the services and practices of the personnel unit.

69 The system for course review and evaluation is not working well. Criteria for the review and evaluation of courses have been defined but there is little evidence that course teams work closely to these. A manual on quality is still at an early stage of development. There is no agreed format for course files and record keeping. The extent and effectiveness of the monitoring of the quality of courses vary across the college. The quality assurance process does not require course teams to monitor the quality of curriculum development, resources and staff training. Meetings of course teams do not always lead to clear action plans. Where action plans have been developed, their implementation is neither consistently nor rigorously monitored. Some section heads have failed to develop an overview of the quality of provision in their section. The process of internal verification of standards of assessment is not well developed. There are no arrangements yet in place to observe and assess the effectiveness of teaching, in order to identify and disseminate good practice. The monitoring of the quality of franchised provision is inadequate. It is based solely on responses to questionnaires which students complete at the end of their course.

70 Performance indicators are being introduced. These cover examination results, attendance and retention rates, progression and enrolment trends. The college has commenced an analysis of its data to identify performance against trends or national comparators. In some cases the data are incomplete. At course level, there is little setting of targets or monitoring of performance indicators.

71 There is a well-produced charter which meets the main requirements of *The Charter for Further Education* published by the Department for Education and Employment. The college's charter does not feature strongly in the college's quality assurance arrangements and there is little monitoring of the degree to which the college meets its charter commitments. The complaints procedure is described in the charter but it is not well publicised in the college. Last year, there were 30 complaints. The college's records show that appropriate action was taken on these.

72 The college is working towards accreditation for Investor in People status. A staff appraisal system has been introduced. At the time of the inspection, only about 10 per cent of staff had been appraised. The college allocates about 2 per cent of its staffing budget to staff development. Some

---

staff-development activities are organised and take place in the college; these include recent training and development lead body training events and courses on time management, GNVQ developments and computer applications. There is insufficient evaluation of the outcomes of staff development. Managers do not assess its cost effectiveness against college objectives or plan its implementation.

73 As part of its preparation for inspection, the college carried out a self-assessment process which led to an internal report and action plan. The college found the self-assessment process useful and intends to carry out further self-assessments annually as part of its quality procedures. The self-assessment report follows the framework of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report is well written but does not fully identify the college's strengths and weaknesses. For instance, it does not cover many of the weaknesses identified during the inspection.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

74 The college has 88 full-time teachers and 144 part-time teachers who represent 34 full-time equivalents. There are 17 full-time and nine full-time equivalent part-time staff who support learning. Fifty-seven per cent of full-time, and 51 per cent of part-time teachers are male, and 80 per cent of support staff in the college are female. Ninety per cent of the full-time teachers and fewer than half of the part-time teachers are teacher trained. The majority of full-time teachers have professional qualifications which are appropriate to the subject areas they teach. In some vocational areas, the number of staff undergoing training to gain training and development lead body awards is low. These include construction, business studies, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Most full-time teachers have relevant professional or industrial experience but in some instances it is not recent. The college provides opportunities for staff to update their industrial and commercial experience but the extent to which they have done so has varied. Part-time teachers do not usually attend meetings of course teams and do not take part in discussions about the development of the curriculum or other aspects of course planning. Many staff in the college demonstrate enthusiasm and commitment. Some do not.

75 The levels of support staff are satisfactory. The college supports the training of support staff and they are encouraged to attend college courses. Technicians in art and design, and science and information technology make a valuable contribution to the development of teaching resources. In some instances, they help to supervise students in practical areas.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

76 Most areas of the college have good levels of equipment. In some areas, the equipment is not well maintained. In catering, equipment is

---

basic. Although it meets current requirements, it is in need of replacement. In engineering, the computer-aided design suite, the computer numerically controlled machine tool workshop, the fabrication and welding workshops and the motor vehicle workshop are well equipped but there is a shortage of some consumable materials in the motor vehicle area. The range of equipment in engineering laboratories and workshops is outdated. Some machine tools are old and under used. Equipment in the construction section matches that generally available in industry; it is suitable for the courses designed to meet local employers' training needs. The range of equipment in concrete technology, levelling and surveying, however, is inadequate. There is a good range of consumable materials, carefully maintained, in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. The equipment in beauty therapy is relatively new. Much of the equipment in hairdressing is about eight years old and some is in need of repair or replacement. There is no overall plan for the replacement of equipment in the college.

77 Computing facilities at the Channelside and Howard Street campuses are good. The computer system is networked between the two sites and it usually provides students with easy access to up-to-date facilities either on a timetabled basis or at times which suit them. There have been some difficulties with the network which have sometimes frustrated the students and inhibited their learning. The college has good facilities for students with visual impairment. These include a Braille printer which teachers or students can use to create notes or transform classroom handouts into Braille text. The college's computer network does not extend to the John Whinnerah Institute. Students based on this site who require computing facilities have to go to the Howard Street site to use the computing equipment there. Classrooms and practical areas on all three campuses are generally well provided with equipment such as overhead projectors, video players, and whiteboards. The range and quality of classroom resources and furnishings are particularly good at the Channelside campus. They are less satisfactory at the John Whinnerah Institute.

78 The college has centrally-managed learning resources at both the Howard Street and Channelside campuses. The standard of provision is generally good and it is continuing to improve. The libraries on these two campuses are closely linked and in most respects, they operate as a single facility. There is a single catalogue for all the learning resources in the college, including those held in teaching areas, in order to make these more widely available to students and staff throughout the college. Library and computing facilities on each campus are situated close together. The college is in the process of integrating these facilities to create learning centres. The library service carries out regular audits of its bookstock and removes old and outdated texts. The library at Channelside has an extensive stock of books and periodicals, mostly with an emphasis on engineering and science. The library at Howard Street has a good bookstock and this is now being expanded to include compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database facilities, video and audio tape

---

collections and a large range of periodicals. There is no library or learning centre at the John Whinnerah Institute.

### **Accommodation**

79 The college operates on three campuses at Howard Street, Channelside and the John Whinnerah Institute. The Anson Street building and the college's nursery at St Mary's Annexe form part of the Howard Street campus. The college's new accommodation strategy is to concentrate provision at Howard Street and Channelside. The college has a clear maintenance plan and this is reflected in the generally good environment it provides for students and staff. Most of the classrooms, workshops, laboratories, corridors and communal areas on each campus are well maintained and in good decorative order. The main reception areas at Howard Street and Channelside are accessible and welcoming. The college's accommodation is used to near capacity between 09.00 and 16.00 hours but is little used between 16.00 and 18.00 hours. Procedures for ensuring that courses and classes are assigned to appropriate accommodation are not working effectively.

80 Access for the students and staff who use wheelchairs is good at the Howard Street and Channelside campuses, where lifts and ramps are provided. Some wheelchair users, however, find the access ramp leading to the student services area at Howard Street too steep. The John Whinnerah Institute is not suitable for wheelchair users. It has steps at each entrance, and internally, on the ground floor, and there is no lift to the upper floor.

81 The main, four-storey building on the Howard Street campus is in generally good repair apart from the gymnasium which is to be redeveloped. Some of the central administrative offices are cramped and overcrowded. The building has relatively few small classrooms suitable for smaller groups of students, particularly in humanities, which use the accommodation there. Classrooms are specifically allocated to a particular subject or vocational area. They are adequately decorated but lack wall displays. The student services area has recently been imaginatively refurbished. It is, however, too far away from the reception area. The refectory area is too small. The Anson Street building provides good specialist accommodation for engineering and construction. The St Mary's Annexe is old but serviceable and is conveniently located for students who wish to leave their children in the college nursery while they attend classes.

82 The Channelside campus is a recently-constructed modern building with a good mix of classrooms, laboratories, workshops, staff workrooms and spacious communal areas, including a refectory. There are good facilities for engineering, science, construction and information technology. Some classrooms and workshops are too small for the larger groups which use them.

---

83 The John Whinnerah Institute was built in the 1930s and the college shares it with Cumbria County Council. It is in generally good condition. There are suitable specialist areas for catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. However, many of the specialist rooms are too small for the numbers of students using them. As a result, the further growth of specialist provision on this site is severely restricted.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

84 The college is making progress towards achieving its mission. Its strengths are:

- the significant broadening of provision
- the successful efforts which have been made to respond to the rapidly changing needs of the local population
- the effective links it has developed with schools, other colleges and higher education
- its productive links with the local TEC and its contribution in helping to regenerate the local economy
- sound financial systems
- the effective guidance and support provided to students by the student services unit
- good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the maturity and commitment of adult students and their responsive and enthusiastic approach to learning
- good levels of equipment to support teaching in most areas of the college
- accommodation which is well maintained and in good decorative order.

85 To improve the quality of its provision, the college should:

- review its management arrangements and develop better lines of communication between section heads and senior managers
- develop a clear overall strategy to research existing and potential new markets, and to plan and market its courses accordingly
- strengthen employers' involvement in the development of the curriculum, and more generally in the work of the college
- improve course and lesson planning, and the quality of teaching in many programme areas
- encourage governors to take a more active role in monitoring curriculum developments and students' achievements and in evaluating their own performance
- ensure that the planning of units and sections is related more effectively to the strategic plan

- 
- improve the quality assurance system and the implementation and consistency of course review and evaluation processes
  - ensure the college meets its charter commitments
  - improve the management information system
  - improve the accuracy and reliability of data on students' achievements and publish a summary of these for the information of the general public
  - submit proper returns on examination results to the Department for Education and Employment in order that it may determine its position in the national performance tables
  - improve tutorial provision and the standard of record keeping by tutors.

---

## FIGURES

- 
- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)

---

  - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)

---

  - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

---

  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

---

  - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

---

  - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

---

**Note:** the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

---

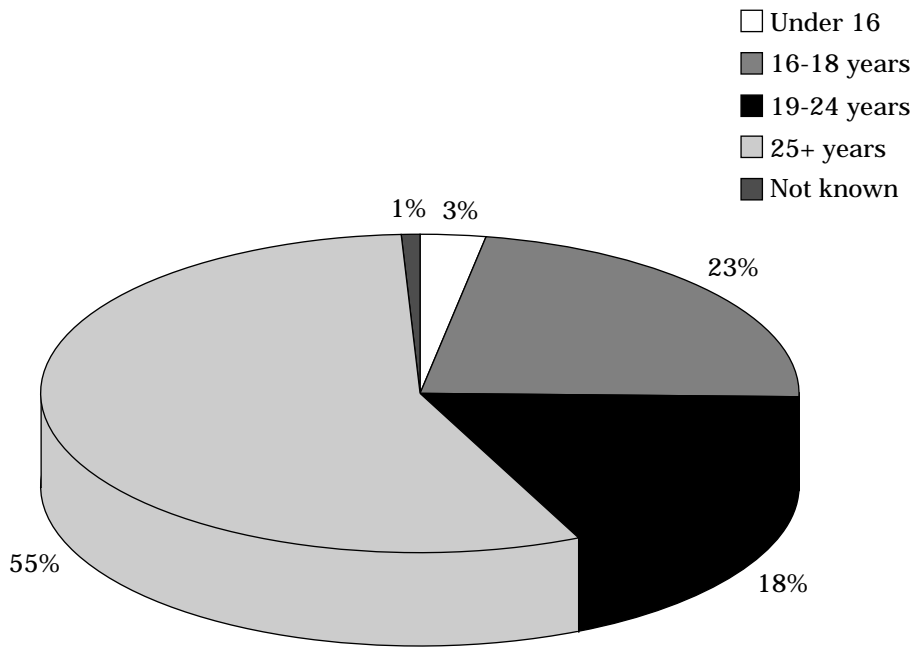


---

**Figure 1**

---

**Furness College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)**



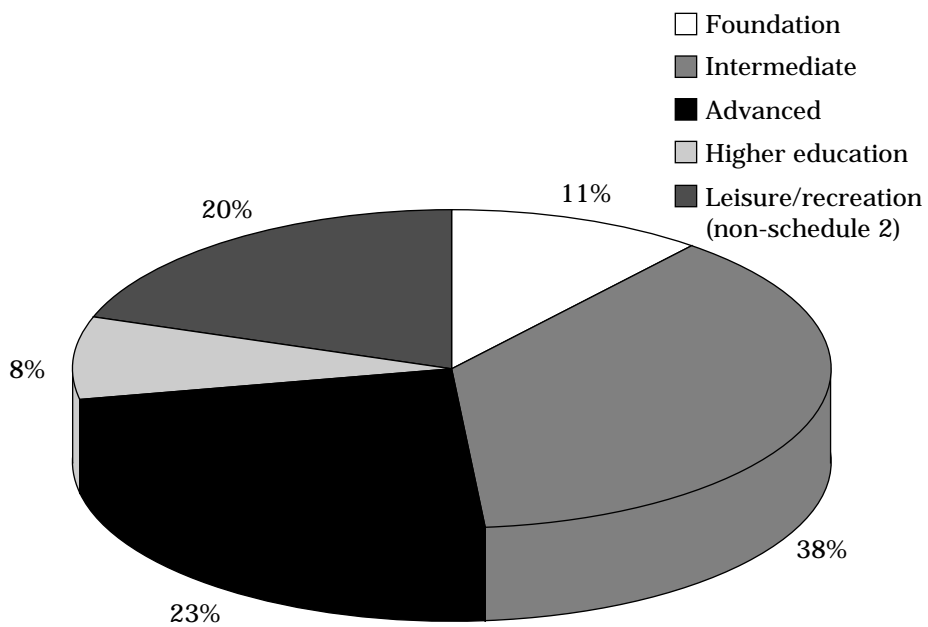
Student numbers: 5,166

---

**Figure 2**

---

**Furness College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)**



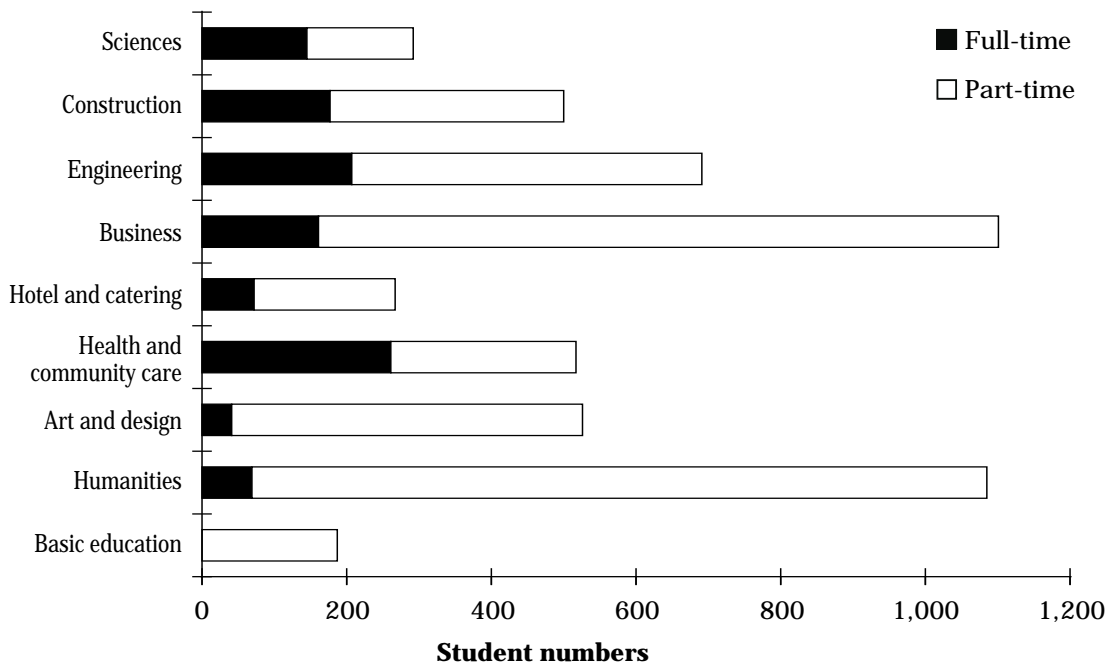
Student numbers: 5,166

---

---

**Figure 3**

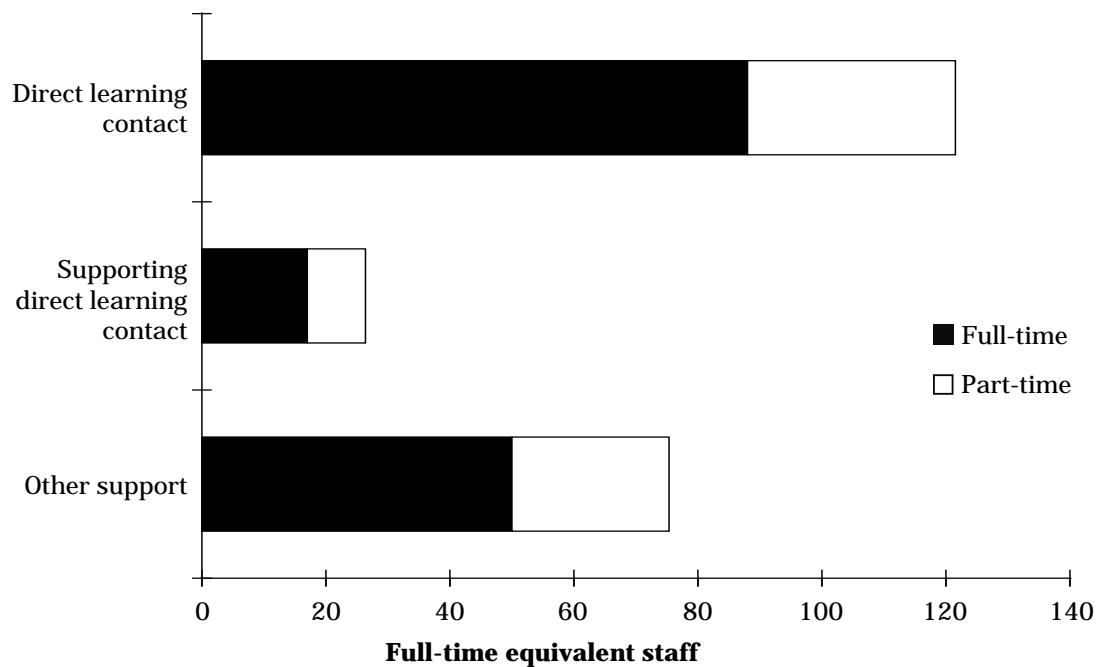
**Furness College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)**



Student numbers: 5,166

**Figure 4**

**Furness College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)**



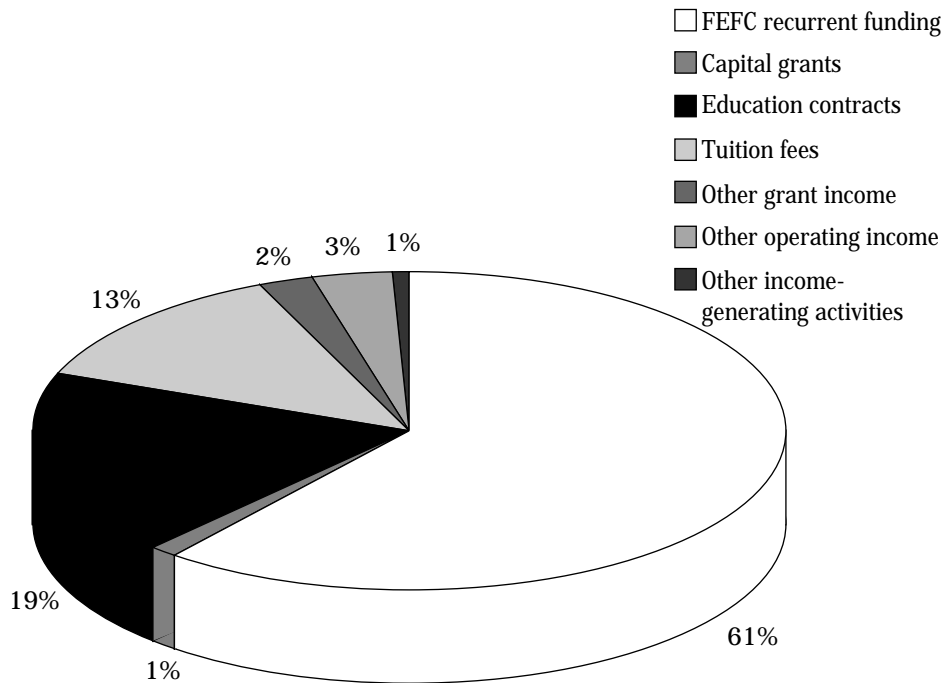
Full-time equivalent staff: 223

---

**Figure 5**

---

**Furness College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)**

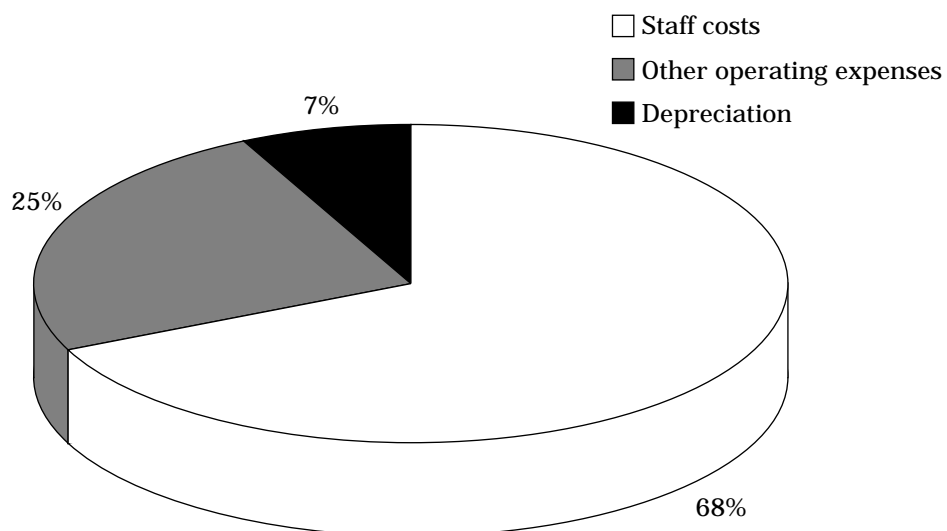


Estimated income: £6,336,000

**Figure 6**

---

**Furness College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Estimated expenditure: £6,942,000

---

Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
August 1996